United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ General Assembly President opens World Hearings on Development; citing example of D-Day, says forum could be turning-point in war against poverty.

+ Secretary-General, beginning visit to Geneva, discusses Bosnian peace process with Thorvald Stoltenberg and Special Representative Akashi.

+ Special Representative Akashi meets with Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serb delegations as cease-fire talks begin in Geneva.

+ Government of Yemen informs Secretary-General that cease-fire will begin at midnight tonight; seeks help in fighting Aden refinery fire.

+ Member States owe United Nations $2.9 billion as of 31 May; $957 million owed to regular budget and $1.9 billion to peace-keeping.

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General Assembly President S.R. Insanally (Guyana) today opened the World Hearings on Development at Headquarters. Observing that today was the anniversary of D-Day, the turning-point of the Second World War, he expressed the hope that the Hearings would mark the turing-point in the war against poverty and social malaise. He said only in the United Nations could development be merged with political matters, and warned that the work of the Organization would unravel without a strong commitment to both.

The Hearings are being held against the backdrop of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's recent report "An Agenda for Development", which warns that development is receding from the international agenda in an era of sweeping technological and economic change. In an address to the Hearings delivered by Special Adviser Ismat Kittani, the Secretary-General said the survival of the human community depended on the adoption of a culture of develpment. He stressed that peace and development were mutually supportive, adding that peace would not last long if the efforts of the Blue Helmets were not followed up by development work.

(more)

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The Secretary-General emphasized the importance of economic growth for development, saying it was impossible for nations to progress when they had to use foreign exchange earnings to meet old debts and when the pains of adjustment were not eased by develpment assistance. Although governments bore the major responsibility for development, there was no alternative to an active United Nations role, he continued. The Organization could channel funds, provide experts and information, set priorities and standards, and conduct operations in the field.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was in Geneva today, where he met with Thorvald Stoltenberg, Co-Chairman of the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia, and Special Representative Yasushi Akashi. Mr. Akashi briefed the Secretary-General on ongoing efforts by the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) to achieve a cease-fire agreement in Bosnia and Herzogovina. The Secretary-General reiterated the importance of achieving a complete cessasation of hostilities as part of an overall political settlement, and assured Mr. Akashi of his continued support.

The Secretary-General later met with Vladimir Petrovsky, Director-General of the United Nations office in Geneva and Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament. Among the topics they discussed were the work of the Conference on Disarmament and preparations in Geneva for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations. Tomorrow, the Secretary-General is expected to meet with his Special Envoy for Yemen, Lakhdar Brahimi, and his Special Representative for Burundi, Ahmedou Ould Abdallah.

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Talks aimed at achieving a cease-fire agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina started today in Geneva, following the withdrawal by Bosnian Serb armed elements from the 3-kilometre exclusion zone around Gorazde, according to a United Nations spokesman. The Secretary-General's Special Representative for the former Yugoslavia, Yasushi Akashi, had separate meetings with delegations from the Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Serb authorities. The talks are scheduled to continue tomorrow.

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The Government of Yemen today informed Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali that a cease-fire would begin in that country at midnight tonight (2100 GMT), according to a United Nations spokesman. The Secretary-General is following developments closely, and has been in contact with Lakhdar Brahimi, his Special Envoy and Head of the fact-finding mission to Yemen, as well as with the parties concerned.

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The spokesman said the Secretary-General had received a request for emergency firefighting support to halt a fire at a refinery in Aden, and had been in touch with concerned States.

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As of 31 May, Member States owed the United Nations a total of $2.9 billion, according to the latest update on the Organization's financial situation. Of that amount, $957 million was for assessments for the regular budget and $1.9 billion was for peace-keeping operations.

The United States -- the largest debtor -- owed almost $300 million to the regular budget, and more than $565 million to the peace-keeping budget, for the current year; it owed more than $230 million and $100 million respectively for prior years. Japan and the Russian Federation had regular budget contributions outstanding for the current year, but not for previous years. However, the Russian Federation owed almost $550 million in total peace-keeping contributions.

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